

Luke Chapter 16 v 1 - 15

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Date: 08 March 2020

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[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. Good to be with you this morning. Good to welcome some visitors from Dewsbury and anyone else I've missed. Well I'm going to read a few verses from Psalm 89 to begin. So Psalm 89 verse 1 says this, I will sing of the Lord's great love forever. With my mouth I will make your faithfulness known for all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to David my servant. I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations. The heavens praise your wonders, Lord your faithfulness to, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies can compare with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? Moving to verse 9, you rule over the surging sea. When its waves mount up, you still them. Well it's good to remember in our trials, whatever we're going through in life, that God is faithful, isn't he? We take comfort in God's faithfulness, that he is the same yesterday, today and forever. And what we read in his word is true of him today and is true of him tomorrow. So we're going to begin by remembering our faithful God again and worshipping him. Praise my soul, the king of heaven. Number 27. Let's sing.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning to worship you and we praise you that you are a faithful God. We declare with the psalmist that your love stands forever, that you have established your faithfulness in the heavens itself. We praise you that you are not only faithful, but you are gentle and you are kind and you know how feeble we are and you care for us as a father to a son, to a child. And we often confess that we neglect you and we forget you and we do not remind ourselves of your goodness to us, of your faithfulness. But we pray this morning that you would turn our eyes once again to you, that you would help us to worship you, to remember your faithfulness, to thank you.

And we pray that you would speak to us this morning, we pray. Amen. From Luke and chapter 16. If you'd like to turn there in your Bibles, Luke and chapter 16.

Beginning at verse 1. Reading through to verse 15. If you've got one of the church Bibles, that's page 1049. Page 1049, Luke chapter 16.

Reading from verse 1. Jesus told his disciples, There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions.

[3 : 24] So he called him in and asked him, What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer. The manager said to himself, What shall I do now?

My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do, so that when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.

So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, How much do you owe my master? 3,000 liters of olive oil, he replied. The manager told him, Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it 1,500.

Then he asked the second, And how much do you owe? 30 tons of wheat, he replied. He told him, Take your bill, and make it 24. The master commended the dishonest manager, because he had acted shrewdly.

For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than other people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you'll be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

[4 : 40] Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much. And whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?

And if you've not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you'll be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. The Pharisees who loved money heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, you're the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts.

What people value highly is detestable in God's sight. We'll come back to that in a moment. Just leading us to this point and into the Lord's presence.

Let's turn back then to Luke and chapter 16 in our Bibles, page 1049. And continue our journey through this Gospel of Luke.

[5 : 58] The last two weeks or so, the last two times, we've been looking at the parables of Jesus, beginning at verse 15. The three parables of something that was lost, the lost sheep, the lost coin.

And then last week, we looked at the parable of the lost son. And we have yet another parable here in chapter 16 and following.

It's been good to go through Tim Chester's book, *Enjoying God*. I hope that you've been able to read it and benefit from it. And we've been doing it in the Wednesday meetings as well as in the home groups too.

And I was amused by the fact that Tim opens chapter 6 with an illustration from *Blackadder*. And if he's allowed to use an illustration from *Blackadder*, then I hope I can get away with one as well. *Blackadder* was a TV series, long-running TV series during the 90s particularly, following a man called Edmund Blackadder. And Edmund Blackadder, in every episode, appeared also his servant, Baldrick.

[7 : 06] And almost inevitably, in every episode as well, Baldrick would get to a point in the story where Baldrick would turn to his master, Blackadder, and he'd say to him, I have a cunning plan.

Because they were usually in trouble, in difficulty. The problem was with the cunning plan that Baldrick has, it was usually a very silly plan. And it had no chance of saving them from the predicament that they were in at the time.

However, when we get to Jesus' parable here in Luke 16, we meet somebody who does have a cunning plan, and it's a very good plan. He has an eureka moment, as it were, a lightbulb moment, when he finds a way out from his predicament.

And it's there in verse 3. The main person, the anti-hero, as it were, is this manager. And he said to himself, what shall I do now?

He's about to lose his job. My master has taken away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg. And in verse 4, we have, I know what I'll do. Now, it's lost a little bit in our English, but in the original, there's a sense of a sudden surprising thought comes to his mind.

[8 : 19] I know what I'll do. And we've met this before, haven't we? Because if you go back into the previous parable, we find there that the anti-hero again of the story, the youngest son, the prodigal son, as we call him, also had a moment where he had a lightbulb, a eureka moment, verse 17.

When he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired servants? He got an inspirational idea, something that turns, in his mind, it wasn't there before.

It wasn't there when he was feeding the pigs. It wasn't there when he was wasting all his money. But now, there's this eureka moment. And it's the same with the dishonest manager here as well. Both these parables have something else in common as well, which shows us that what we're looking at is one long line of teaching by Jesus in one occasion. Okay?

This is one occasion. And what Luke has put together is all of this teaching of Jesus. As he's speaking and following on the same themes throughout. And of course, we can see what that next common denominator, as it were, between the two stories of the lost son and the dishonest steward are, that they are both squanderers.

[9 : 34] They are both wasters of other people's money. We know that of the son, of course. We know that in verse 13, we're told, not long after that, that his father had given him his inheritance, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country, and there he squandered his wealth in wild living.

And then we're also told about the dishonest manager in verse 2, sorry, verse 1. There was a rich man whose manager accused of, well, that's exactly the same word, but it's translated differently in English, squandered his possessions, wasted his possessions.

So this parable, chapter 16, we're told that the audience or the main congregation, as it were, the main people that Jesus was speaking to were his disciples.

As we went through the story, we realized that the Pharisees are still there in the background, listening, hanging on Jesus' words. In verse 14, the Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

They're still there, listening to Jesus, but sadly, there's no light bulb moment in the Pharisees. There's no coming to sensible thinking. Again, they do not get what Jesus is saying.

[10:53] In fact, more than that, they become more self-righteous, we find there, and even more increasingly arrogant towards Jesus as he's teaching, even publicly sneering at him for saying the things he said.

Let me ask you a question this morning. Have you had a light bulb moment, a eureka moment in your life with regard to Jesus? Has there been a transformation in the way that you think about him and his teaching, his gospel?

You see, that has to happen. For every single one of us, there has to happen in our lives a moment, an event, a transformation, a change, a coming to our senses about who Jesus is and what he came to do in this world and how that relates to you and I.

Because if we, like Baldrick of old, put our faith in our own cunning plans about life and death and eternity, then we shall never be saved, as the young man was.

we shall forever remain lost, as we looked last week, the older son was. This coming to our senses, this realization that I know what I will do in regard to Jesus is the work of God himself.

[12:18] It's when his Holy Spirit brings spiritual life and light so that we see what we never saw before. Without his illumination, our understanding stays blind, dead even when it comes to God and spiritual truth.

That explains why we have so many religions in the world around about us and new ones it seems springing up here and there, cults and so on. Why is that so?

Because men and women, humanity, are always seeking and trying in their own blindness and cunning to relate to God and to find God and to worship God.

As long as there are human people in the world, as long as there are different ideas and thoughts, there will be different thoughts and ideas about God, but the only way that we can know what God truly is like is when God himself gives us that revelation of himself which he's given in his word and in his son, the Lord Jesus, but also personally and individually when there is that light bulb moment in our lives and we see just how wrong we've been, we see just how Jesus is the saviour of the world.

We have a different view of God. That happens in that prodigal son story, doesn't it? What happens to the son when he came to his senses? He saw his father in a different light.

[13:48] He saw him as his saviour. He saw him as the one who would receive him and forgive him and give him food and comfort. And so the Bible tells us that something like that must happen to us.

Paul, writing to the Christians in Corinth, tells them, for God, who said, let light shine out of darkness, made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Christ. That's what Jesus is talking about when in this parable, as he explains it, he talks about believers, disciples, as the people of the light. That's who we've become, people who've experienced the light of God's revelation, the light of God's truth, the light of who we are and what is the reality of this world in which we live.

So back to this parable. It's a strange parable, we might say. Here's a man who's dishonest with a cunning plan. Here's a man who is doing very naughty things with other people's money.

Is that what Jesus is condoning? Is he saying, this is a good example to follow, we should be dishonest? No, he's not, of course. Jesus is not condoning the devious and the corrupt actions of the manager, but what he is, is he's highlighting something which we all know and recognize.

[15:17] Verse 8, the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than the people of the light. The men and women of our world, the men and women of our generation and community, those who get ahead in life are those who know how to play the system.

It's a fact, isn't it? that people use wealth, position, for their own ends, to get the best for themselves, to enlarge their fortune, to forward their career.

Just like the manager in this story, the people of our world are shrewd and cunning and downright clever at making themselves richer and better off.

Now in this story, in this parable of Jesus, the manager, of course, is caught out. He's been misusing his boss's wealth, his boss's money that he was the financial advisor for, the financial controller of.

The owner finds out that his manager has been either fiddling the books or doing something bad with his money and so he calls him into his office and he says, look, you need to give me a final set of accounts because I want to see what you've been doing.

[16:36] with all this money. I want to see what you're doing but let me assure you, your job's gone. And so he's got this last opportunity. He doesn't know what he's going to do. He's in big trouble. He doesn't want to work.

He doesn't want to beg. So he comes up with his cunning plan. He approaches all his master's debtors. Clearly his master was somebody who supplied or provided olive oil and wheat and other things as well.

Perhaps he had a big farm or business. So he approaches those who owe his master money for what they have received and they themselves, these debtors, are also dishonest and greedy, fortunately for the manager and so he gets them to forge a new bill of sales, much reducing the amount that they owe.

Does that clearly not only with these two people, probably with many others besides. his boss, although no doubt he's rather annoyed at the loss of money, takes his hat off as it were, congratulates the manager for his cunning.

The master commended the dishonest manager because he'd acted shrewdly. What Jesus is pressing for his disciples to take hold of and us as well is this, that we, the people of the light, should likewise be shrewd and clever in the way that we handle the wealth which is under our control.

[18:10] How we use and deal with not only money but with all the possessions that we have. We are not to use them for selfish gain but for eternal and lasting reward.

That's verse 9. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it is gone you'll be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Verses 10 and following, Jesus explains the purpose of this parable and what it really means.

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much. God has entrusted each of us with various good gifts, various riches, various blessings, various possessions, various material things.

Now you may not consider yourself to be rich or wealthy but the reality is that you are. And I'm not just talking about comparing ourselves with those who live in the developing world.

In that sense we are extremely rich but Jesus is talking about much more than money here. All that you own, all that you possess is gifted to you by God.

[19:22] The God who made and cares for this world. If you've got food to eat, clothes to wear, a bed to sleep in and a roof over your head, that's God's riches given to you.

Evidence of his care. If you have a car to drive, money in the bank, a TV, a mobile phone or any other possessions then these are God's gifts to you.

And even if you don't have those things, if you've got none of those material as it were trappings of life but you've got health and strength and if you've got life and if at the moment you're still breathing, these are God's gift to you.

He has entrusted to you everything that you have, everything that you possess comes from him.

The question is this, are you being shrewd with these riches that God has given you? Are you being shrewd like the manager in the parable with what was entrusted to him?

[20:30] Using it to benefit, using it rightly, using it cleverly. You see, the difference between the people of the light, the believer, the disciple of Jesus and the people of the world is this, how do we view what we possess?

How do we view our money, our home? How do we view our health? How do we view our car? How do we view our ISA? How do we view all things?

Because how we view what we possess will affect how we make use of what we possess. If you view what has been given you as yours alone, I've worked for this, I deserve this, this is my right, then you shall use that which you possess for your own benefit alone and for this material, physical

life.

You'll not invest it in eternal and heavenly blessings. But you may say to me, well, why would I want to use the wealth that I can see with my eyes, touch with my hands and use to make a difference in my present life to gain eternal and heavenly riches which I cannot see, touch or use now to make a difference in my life today.

But take notice of what Jesus says when he compares, as it were, all the riches, all the wealth, all the possessions of this life with what are the possessions and blessings of eternal life from God.

[22 : 07] He says, verse 10, whoever can be trusted with very little can be trusted with much. He says the same. And whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

In the second part, verse 11, if you've not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? See, in the right view of our possessions, in the right view of the money we have, and it may be millions and it may be a few pennies, the reality is this, that it's little, it's tiny, it's incomparably small with the much and the real, true riches which come from a life lived for God.

a life in relationship with Him. And something else which perhaps we have definitely forgotten, even as Christians at times, verse 12, if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own.

Whatever God has given you, and that's everything, is on loan to you. It's on loan to you through this life. Because as we say, often, you can't take it with you.

God has loaned you your house. He's loaned you that car. He's loaned you that money. He's loaned you the very health and strength that you have in your body. And for those of us who are parents, He's loaned us these children.

[23 : 37] They're not firstly ours, they are His. He's loaned you your husband. He's loaned you your wife. He's loaned you your parents. Everything that you and I have, God has given us on loan.

And like the shrewd manager who used his possessions or his master's possessions to secure for himself a happy future, we need to use what God has given us to secure for ourselves an eternal future.

It's simply this.

The things that our society consider to be so important, so rich, so valuable, are in fact really worthless, irrelevant, when compared to the treasure that God has for us in heaven.

This reward and treasure in heaven has been a theme of Jesus' teaching all the way through the Gospel of Luke as we've come across it. Back in chapter 6 and verse 23, He says to His disciples, rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven.

[24 : 57] In chapter 12 and verse 33, He says, provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out. a treasure in heaven that will never fail where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

And in a little while later on, in a few weeks in chapter 18, He says to them as well, to the man who was rich, you still lack one thing.

Sell everything you have and give to the poor that you'll have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. Jesus promises us that if we invest in God's kingdom, what He has given us, then we shall never be the losers.

We shall never find our shares plummeting or investment going to the wall. But we shall become richer than we ever dreamt we could be with true riches that are ours to enjoy for eternity.

Do you notice that there where Jesus talks about if you've not been trustworthy with someone else's property who will give you property of your own? The riches that God gives us physically and materially in this world are just for a moment and a time.

[26 : 12] But how we use them is essentially the way that we show who is the master of our hearts and our lives. For He goes on to say, no one can serve two masters.

Either you will hate the one and love the other. You'll be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. What does it look like to live this life where we use the things that God has given us?

What does this shrewd lifestyle look like which shows that we have trusted God and are following Him? We might think that we have to draw up all sorts of studies and rules and questions and descriptions but it's very, very simple.

If you want to live a life which is shrewd and invests for the eternal future, if you want to use the things that God has given you with that right understanding that they are His on loan to you for a time, then it's very simple.

You have to choose who you will serve. No one can serve two masters. Choose who you will serve. You can only serve God or possessions, money, riches, wealth.

[27 : 33] That word that we have translated money is in the AV, mammon. It's an Aramaic word, the language Jesus used which simply means everything that you possess, wealth, riches, and so on.

You can only serve God or you can serve possessions. You can't serve them both at the same time.

You see, if you serve God, then money becomes God's, your money, your possessions become God's as well, don't they? If you belong to Him and everything you have is His, then everything that you possess is His as well and you seek to use it to please your Master.

You seek to use it for His glory. You seek to use it for His pleasure. You seek to use it to be a blessing to those that He wants to bless because your life and all that you possess belongs to Him. But if money is your Master, if possessions and riches, houses and cars, computers and whatever it may be, if they're the things that you live for and Joel very helpfully spoke to the children about that, then God becomes a servant of your money.

[28 : 42] You see, He's only an additional add-on if the money lets me down, then I'll ask God for help. When I run out of money, then I can ask God to give me more.

But He's only there as a safety net. He's only there as something, well, if the money can't provide the joy, then God perhaps can. He becomes second place.

We do not love Him as we should, but we only make Him a servant of ourselves instead of being His servants that we are.

The Pharisees there, they sneered, didn't they? They loved money. They were always wealthy.

They counted money really as an expression of God's goodness to them.

In other words, they said, look, we are rich because we are so good, God has given us good gifts. That mentality still exists in many parts of the world today. It's even taught by so-called Christians too that if God wants you rich and if you're a good Christian and you keep the commandments as these Pharisees did and you live a good life, then God will give you good things.

[29 : 58] But that is not true. The Pharisees believed it so much that they told everybody else about it. That's why Jesus says to them, you're the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others.

They spread this idea amongst all the people who looked up to the Pharisees and said, oh, they're rich because they're good and God is pleased with them so he's given them riches.

But dear friends, whether you are rich or poor financially or physically has nothing to do with your relationship with God. God does not reward us with financial riches to show that we are right with him.

God has blessed you and I, dear friends, with amazing riches which we take for granted, I'm sure. They aren't a sign that God is pleased with you or that you've earned God's favor.

You can never earn God's favor. God is pleased with you if you're in Christ. If you put your faith in Jesus and are following him, then all of Jesus' goodness, all of his loveliness, all of his righteousness becomes yours and God accepts you and receives you.

[31 : 09] But if you're poor or feel yourself poor or you're struggling financially, that's not a sign that God is displeased with you because if you're in Christ, he loves you the same, rich or poor, young or old, male or female, see Jesus looked at the heart or Jesus reveals that God looks at the heart of a person not at the pocket of a person.

Pharisees said, look at our pockets, they're bulging, it shows that God likes us. Jesus said, God looks not at your pocket but your heart and he knows your heart and your heart is set upon the praise of men and women.

Your heart is set upon other gods as Joel told us, the God of popularity. You want everybody to think you're great and so you do everything just to please them and to make yourself look good to them.

Your God is money so you want riches and comfort in this life. That's going to come out in the next parable how Jesus deals with that. You think that all that matters is that I have comfort and pleasure and I don't have any care or concern for those that are poor or those who are without or those who are struggling or those who are unwell.

There's no mercy in my heart. That's what God saw. There's no loving kindness in our heart. You see the trouble is this. Once money becomes the God of your life, once money and possessions are the thing that matter, then not only does God take second place but so do people.

[32 : 42] In fact, people take third place. This money is mine. I've worked for it. I've earned it. I've inherited it. It's mine to spend how I want for myself.

Yes, I'll give a few little scraps to those that are poor from time to time but ultimately, I have no room in my heart for anything else. And the sad truth is that is how the world in which we live operates. The person who is a Christian, the person who is a disciple of Jesus, as we sang in that song, is a servant like he was a servant. He gave of himself that we are to give of ourselves.

And it's not forced. It's not pressurized. It's not because we're made to feel guilty. It's because in our hearts there is God and in our hearts is God's love and his generosity and his character is to give and give and give again.

So this parable asks us this question. Who is your master? Who is your lord?

[33 : 55] Who is your God? And really, if it isn't God, then everything that you're working for is fruitless and barren and empty.

Dear friends, we need to be those who know what to do. Let's pray together, shall we?

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that when you spoke to your disciples of old, you were well aware of how the world operates. You knew what was in their hearts and in the hearts of the Pharisees and you therefore know what's in our hearts too.

Lord, we thank you that your words are not airy, fairy words of heaven. They're not just words which are impractical but they are very, very pertinent to us in our situation.

For Lord, we live in a world of greed, of money, of wealth, of possessions where these things are indeed the gods of our age and we confess, oh Lord, that there are times in our own hearts and lives as Christians when they become too important to us and they become a replacement for you.

[35 : 23] We worry about them more than we worry about serving others and serving you. We think about them when we go down to bed or how we're going to pay the bills, how our finances will be met, how we can make more money instead of giving you thanks for the day that you've given us.

Oh Lord, forgive us for taking for granted that all that we have is on loan from you to enjoy, yes, to give us great a delight but also especially to use for the blessing of others and for your service.

We pray, Lord, that you would, as it were, turn on the light in our minds and hearts to see afresh who you are and how generous you've been to us.

Oh Lord, we pray, especially for those of us here whose God is money, whose God is self, please, oh Lord, cause us to turn away from worshipping these things, to worship you, the true and living God, that we might enjoy the true riches that you have in this world and in eternity.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink or wear or own.

[36 : 45] Do not worry about these things for the world around about us runs after such things and your Father knows that you need them but seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you his kingdom. Amen.

Amen. his forgiveness and como thank you for delight andu Trujillo crimes as well.